AMENDMENTS

In the Claims

1.   (Currently Amended) A method comprising:

providing a computer including

       a processor and

       a memory operably coupled to the processor;

providing a first software program capable of being operably installed on the computer;

providing a second software program capable of being operably installed on the computer

       and capable of being used interoperably with the first software program;

modifying the second software program to include data defining a specific point in time

       after which the second software program cannot be used interoperably with the

       first software program;

digitally signing the second software program including the data defining the specific

       point in time;

determining whether the second software program has been altered after the digitally

       signing;

verifying that the specific point in time has not passed; and

using the second software program interoperably with the first software program if and

       only if the determining determines that the second software program has not been

       altered after the digitally signing and the verifying verifies that the specific point

       in time has not passed; and wherein,

the second software program includes a device information file and the data defining the

       specific point in time is included in the device information file.

2.   (Cancelled) Please cancel claim 2.

3.   (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising

verifying after the using that the specific point in time has not passed and blocking

        interoperable use of the second software program with the first software program

        if the specific point in time has passed.

4.   (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein

the first software program is an operating system and the second software program is an

        application software program.

5.   (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein

the first software program is an operating system and the second software program is a

        peripheral driver.

6.   (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein

the first software program is an application software program and the second software

        program is a plug-in.

7.   (Currently Amended) A computer system comprising:

a processor;

a first software program capable of being operably coupled to the processor;

a digitally signed second software program, the second software program capable of

        being operably coupled to the processor, capable of being used interoperably with

        the first software program, and

including data defining a specific point in time after which the second software program

        cannot be used interoperably with the first software program; and

a memory coupled to the processor, the memory including

means for determining whether the second software program has been altered,

means for verifying that the specific point in time has not passed, and

means for using the second software program interoperably with the first software

        program if and only if it is determined that the second software program has not

        been altered and it is verified that the specific point in time has not passed <u>and</u>

        <u>wherein,</u>

the second software program includes a device information file and the data defining the specific point in time is included in the device information file.

8. (Cancelled) Please cancel claim 8.

9. (Original) The computer system of claim 7, wherein the memory coupled to the processor further includes

means for verifying after an interoperable use of the second software program with the first software program that the specific point in time has not passed and

means for blocking interoperable use of the second software program with the first software program if the specific point in time has passed.

10. (Original) The computer system of claim 7, wherein

the first software program is an operating system and the second software program is an application software program.

11. (Original) The computer system of claim 7, wherein

the first software program is an operating system and the second software program is a peripheral driver.

12. (Original) The computer system of claim 7, wherein

the first software program is an application software program and the second software program is a plug-in.

13. (Currently Amended) An apparatus for limiting use of a first software program interoperably with a second software program comprising:

means for modifying the second software program to include data defining a specific point in time after which the second software program cannot be used interoperably with the first software program;

means for digitally signing the second software program including the data defining the specific point in time;

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means for determining whether the second software program has been altered after the

digitally signing;

means for verifying that the specific point in time has not passed; and

means for using the second software program interoperably with the first software

program if and only if

it is determined that the second software program has not been altered after the digitally

signing and

it is verified that the specific point in time has not passed_and wherein,

the second software program includes a device information file and the data defining the

specific point in time is included in the device information file.

14.   (Original) The apparatus of claim 13, further comprising:

means for verifying after an interoperable use of the second software program with the

first software program that the specific point in time has not passed and

means for blocking interoperable use of the second software program with the first

software program if the specific point in time has passed.

15.   (Cancelled) Please cancel claim 15.

16.   (Original) The apparatus of claim 13, wherein

the first software program is an operating system and the second software

program is an application software program.

17.   (Original) The apparatus of claim 13, wherein

the first software program is an operating system and the second software program is a

peripheral driver.

18.   (Original) The apparatus of claim 13, wherein

the first software program is an application software program and the second software

program is a plug-in.

19.   (Currently Amended) A method comprising:

providing a computer including

    a processor and

    a memory operably coupled to the processor;

providing an application software program capable of being operably installed on the computer;

providing a plug-in capable of being operably installed on the computer and capable of being used interoperably with the application software program;

modifying the plug-in to include a specific set of preconditions limiting use of the plug-in interoperably with the application software program;

digitally signing the plug-in including the specific set of preconditions;

determining whether the plug-in has been altered after the digitally signing;

verifying that the specific set of preconditions limiting use of the plug-in interoperably with the application software program is met; and

using the plug-in interoperably with the application software program if and only if the determining determines that the plug-in has not been altered after the digitally signing and the verifying verifies that the specific set of preconditions is met; and wherein

the specific set of preconditions limiting use of the plug-in interoperably with the first software program includes data defining a specific point in time after which the second software program cannot be used interoperably with the first software program;

the plug-in includes a device information file and the data defining the specific point in time is included in the device information file.

20.   (Cancelled) Please cancel claim 20.

21.   (Cancelled) Please cancel claim 21.

22.   (Original) The method of claim 19, further comprising

verifying after the using that the specific set of preconditions limiting use of the second software program interoperably with the first software program continues to be

met and blocking interoperable use of the second software program with the first software program if any of the specific set of preconditions limiting use are not met.

23.   (Currently Amended) A computer system comprising:

a processor;

a first software program capable of being operably coupled to the processor;

a digitally signed second software program, the second software program capable of being operably coupled to the processor,

capable of being used interoperably with the first software program, and

including data defining a specific point in time after which the second software program cannot be used interoperably with the first software program; and

a memory coupled to the processor, the memory including

a circuit for determining whether the second software program has been altered,

a circuit for verifying that the specific point in time has not passed, and

a circuit for using the second software program interoperably with the first software program if and only if the circuit for determining determines that the second software program has not been altered and

the circuit for verifying verifies that the specific point in time has not passed; and wherein

the second software program includes a device information file and the data defining the specific point in time is included in the device information file.

24.   (Original) The computer system of claim 23, wherein the memory coupled to the processor further includes

a circuit for verifying after an interoperable use of the second software program with the first software program that the specific point in time has not passed and

a circuit for blocking interoperable use of the second software program with the first software program if the specific point in time has passed.

25.   (Currently Amended) An apparatus for limiting use of a first software program interoperably with a second software program comprising:

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a circuit for modifying the second software program to include data defining a specific
point in time after which the second software program cannot be used
interoperably with the first software program;

a circuit for digitally signing the second software program including the data defining the
specific point in time;

a circuit for determining whether the second software program has been altered after the
digitally signing;

a circuit for verifying that the specific point in time has not passed; and

a circuit for using the second software program interoperably with the first software
program if and only if

the circuit for determining determines that the second software program has not been
altered after the digitally signing and

the circuit for verifying verifies that the specific point in time has not passed; and
wherein

the second software program includes a device information file and the data defining the
specific point in time is included in the device information file.

26.   (Original) The apparatus of claim 25, further comprising:

a circuit for verifying after an interoperable use of the second software program with the
first software program that the specific point in time has not passed and a circuit
for blocking interoperable use of the second software program with the first
software program if the specific point in time has passed.